Isra' and Mi'raj – A Scientific Perspective

Mahmood Jawaid

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Abstract:

Every year on the 27th of Rajab, Muslims around the world commemorate the event called Al-Isra` and al-Mi'raj, the Prophet[SAW]'s night journey from Mecca to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem from where he embarked on the second leg of the journey heavenwards.

There are different versions of this journey. Some say that both the events happened in a dream, while others are of the opinion that both of these took place in the waking state and the Prophet[SAW] physically went on the journey, and some say that it was merely a mystic vision shown to him.

The analysis of the author suggests that Al-Isra could have been a bodily experience. Technically, with a little lift from Jibraeel[AS], who can travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it was possible for the Prophet[SAW] to physically travel to Jerusalem and return to Mecca in less than five minutes.

Al-Miraj, on the other hand, could not have been a bodily or mystical experience. It could not even be a dream. It fits the core elements of a superlative form of out of body experience (OBE), which is beyond imagination. The state he was in was very conducive to trigger such an OBE. While the body stayed where he was sleeping, his conscience (soul) saw things which fits the pattern of an OBE e.g. looking at what Jibraeel[AS] was doing with his body, passing through a huge space (heaven), meeting the dead (some of the Prophets), and seeing a bright light and the paradise.

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Introduction

Every year on the 27th of Rajab, Muslims around the world commemorate the event called Al-Isra` and al-Mi'raj, the Prophet's night journey from Mecca to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem from where he embarked on the second leg of the journey heavenwards.[1] According to authentic traditions, the event took place a year before the migration (Hijrah). It has been related by about twenty five companions. Anas bin Malik[RA], Malik bin Sa'asaah[RA], Abu Dhar Ghaffari[RA], and Abu Hurairah[RA] have related the details of the event. Besides them, Umar[RA], Ali[RA], Abdullah bin Masud[RA] and others have also some parts of the event. According to the reports, one night Jibraeel[AS] transported the Prophet[SAW] on Buraq from Masjid-e-Haram to Masjid-Aqsa (the Temple). He then took the Prophet[SAW] to the heaven, where he met some of the great Prophets[SA] in different heavens. At last he reached the highest place in the heavens and was received in audience by Allah[ST]. It was there that besides other important instructions five daily prayers were prescribed. He then returned to the Temple and then back to Majid-e-Haram. During this journey, according to many of the reports, Paradise and Hell were also shown to him.[2]

There are, however, two sets of reporting. In the earliest interpretations of the Miʿrāj, the Prophet[SAW] was transported directly to the lowest heaven. But early in Islamic history the story of the ascension came to be associated with the story of the Prophet[SAW]'s night journey (Isrāʾ) from the Mecca to Jerusalem. The two separate incidents were gradually combined so that chronologically the purification of the Prophet[SAW] in his sleep begins the sequence. He is then transported in a single night from Mecca to Jerusalem. From there, he was accompanied by Jibrīl to the seven heavens.[3] Ghamidi's analysis suggests that the initial reports only mentioned the ascension to the heaven from Mecca (see Appendix A). The night-journey (*Isra*) to Jerusalem was later added to the initial reporting. The two events, according to him, were two independent events. He, however, is of the view that both of the events took place in dream (*ro'ya*).[4]

There are different versions of this journey. Some say that both the events happened in a dream, while others are of the opinion that both of these took place in the waking state and the Prophet[SAW] physically went on the journey, and some say that it was merely a mystic vision shown to him.[5] Many scholars[6] find the first phase of the journey (Isra) referenced in the first verse of Chapter Bani Israeel[a] and the Mi'raj, the second phase of the journey, referenced in the verses of Chapter An-Najm.[b] Irrespective of whether the two events were independent or followed in sequence, this paper will analyze the nature of these events independently.

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[a] 017.001. Glory to ((Allah)) Who did take His servant for a Journey (*Asra*) by night from the Sacred Mosque (*Masjid-e-Haram*) to the farthest Mosque (*Majid-e-Aqsa*), whose precincts We did bless (*barakna hawlahoo*),- in order that We might show him (*le-noree-yaho*) some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).

[b] 053.005. He was taught (the Quran) by one Mighty in Power, 6. Endued with Wisdom: for he appeared (in stately form); 7. While he was in the highest part of the horizon (*ofoq-il-'Ala'*): 8. Then he approached and came closer, 9. And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths (*qaba-qausayn*) or (even) nearer; 10. So did ((Allah)) convey the inspiration to His Servant- (conveyed) what He (meant) to convey. 11. The (Prophet's) (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw. 12. Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw?

053. 13. For indeed he saw him at a second descent, 14. Near the Lote-tree (*sidra-til-muntaha*) beyond which none may pass: 15. Near it is the Garden of Abode (*Janna-tul-Ma'wa*). 16. Behold, the Lote-tree

Discussion

Al-Isra (The Night-Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem):

The *Isra* Verse[c], if taken independently looks like a bodily journey, however, scholars make it a '*ro'ya*' by reading in in conjunction with the *Ro'ya* Verse.[d] It is not clear what was the rational to tie in the two verses which are fifty nine verses apart with no mention of *Isra* Verse in *Ro'ya* Verse. Except for traveling such a long distance in a portion of the night, the construction of the verse is not much different from a similar verse relating to Ibraheem[AS] and Musa[AS].[e] In all the three verses the verb for showing is the same (*noree).* Whereas Ibraheem[AS] was shown 'the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth (*malakoot-as-samawaat-e-wal-ardh*)', Musa[AS] was going to be shown the great signs of Allah[ST]'s Signs (*ayat-al-kubra*) and the Prophet[SAW] the signs (ayat). Since Ibraheem[AS] was to be shown 'the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth (*malakoot-as-*

(*sidrah*) was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable!) 17. (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong! 18. For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest!

[c] 017.001. Glory to ((Allah)) Who did take His servant for a Journey (*Asra*) by night from the Sacred Mosque (*Masjid-e-Haram*) to the farthest Mosque (*Majid-e-Aqsa*), whose precincts We did bless (*barakna hawlahoo*),- in order that We might show him (*le-noray-yahoo*) some of Our Signs (*ayatena*): for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).

[d] 017.060. Behold! We told thee that thy Lord doth encompass mankind round about: We granted the vision (*ro'ya*) which We showed thee (*araynaka*), but as a trial for men,- as also the Cursed Tree (mentioned) in the Qur'an: We put terror (and warning) into them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression!

[e] 006.075. So also did We show (*noree*) Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth (*malakoot-as-samawaat-e-wal-ardh*), that he might (with understanding) have certitude.

76. When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: "This is my Lord." But when it set, He said: "I love not those that set." 77. When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, He said: "unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray." 78. When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)." But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah. 79. "For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah."

020.009. Has the story of Moses reached thee? 10. Behold, he saw a fire: So he said to his family, "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire; perhaps I can bring you some burning brand therefrom, or find some guidance at the fire."

11. But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard: "O Moses! 12. "Verily I am thy Lord! therefore (in My presence) put off thy shoes: thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa. 13. "I have chosen thee: listen, then, to the inspiration (sent to thee). 14. "Verily, I am Allah. There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise. 15. "Verily the Hour is coming - My design is to keep it hidden - for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its Endeavour. 16. "Therefore let not such as believe not therein but follow their own lusts, divert thee therefrom, lest thou perish!". 17. "And what is that in the right hand, O Moses?" 18. He said, "It is my rod: on it I lean; with it I beat down fodder for my flocks; and in it I find other uses." 19. ((Allah)) said, "Throw it, O Moses!" 20. He threw it, and behold! It was a snake, active in motion. 21. ((Allah)) said, "Seize it, and fear not: We shall return it at once to its former condition".. 22. "Now draw thy hand close to thy side: It shall come forth white (and shining), without harm (or stain),- as another Sign (*ayat-un-ukhra*),- 23. "In order that We may show thee some of our Greatest Signs (*le-noray-ayatena-al-kubra*). (The translation of Verse 23rd is combined with translation from Majid Fakhry)

samawaat-e-wal-ardh)', he did not have to go anywhere, he could be shown these wherever he was. Apparently Musa[AS] was to be shown '*ayat*' when he would reach Egypt and the Prophet[SAW] when he would visit Jerusalem.

The construction of the *Isra* Verse, if taken independently, is no different from a father telling his son "I will take you to New York City, which has a lot of attractive things to see[7], to show you the Statue of Liberty."

Ayat:

The verse states that the purpose of the trip to Jerusalem was to show him *Ayat*. The Quran has used the term '*ayat*' in four ways[8]:

- For the Quranic verses.[f]
- Miracles given to the Prophets.[g]
- Miracles shown by Allah[ST].[h]
- Natural objects and phenomenon.[i]

Obviously what was promised to be shown (*noree*) to the Prophet[SAW] could not be the first three categories, since the Quran was sent to all and the miracles were to convince the non-believers. He was going to be shown some of the places and the phenomenon in Jerusalem. It should be in the same state Ibraheem[AS] was shown the laws of the heavens and the earth and Musa[AS] was shown the greatest signs. The Quran does not say anything unusual about the events regarding Ibraheem[AS] and Musa[AS], so why should it be taken any differently about the Prophet[SAW], except for his nocturnal journey to Jerusalem.

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[f] 022.0 16. Thus have We sent down Clear Signs (*ayat-im-bayyenat*); and verily Allah doth guide whom He will!

[g] 017.101. To Moses We did give Nine Clear Signs (*ayat*): As the Children of Israel: when he came to them, Pharaoh said to him: "O Moses! I consider thee, indeed, to have been worked upon by sorcery!

[h] 054.001. The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder. 2. But if they see a Sign (ayat), they turn away, and say, "This is (but) transient magic." 3. They reject (the warning) and follow their (own) lusts but every matter has its appointed time.

[i] 003.190. Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,- there are indeed Signs (*ayat*) for men of understanding,-

016.011. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes and every kind of fruit: verily in this is a sign for those who give thought (*yatafakkaroon*). 016.012. He has made subject to you the Night and the Day; the sun and the moon; and the stars are in subjection by His Command: verily in this are Signs for men who are wise (*ya'qeloon*). 016.013. And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colours (and qualities): verily in this is a sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude) (*yadh-dhakk-karoon*). --- 016.065. And Allah sends down rain from the skies, and gives therewith life to the earth after its death: verily in this is a Sign for those who listen (*yas-ma'oon*). 016.066. And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive sign. From what is within their bodies between excretions and blood, We produce, for your drink, milk, pure and agreeable to those who drink it. 016.067. And from the fruit of the date-palm and the vine, ye get out wholesome drink and food: behold, in this also is a sign for those who are wise (*ya'qeloon*). 68. And thy Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men's) habitations; 69. Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord: there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colours, wherein is healing for men: verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought (*yatafakkaroon*).

Travel Time:

Jerusalem, being about 770 miles from Mecca[9], technologically it was not possible in the days of the Prophet[SAW] to make a return trip to Jerusalem and back to Mecca in a span of a night. We, however, cannot say that it is technologically impossible. As shown below in the table, a flight to and from Jerusalem will take about three hours in a jet. As explained by the author in one of his publications[10], the angels can travel up to the speed of light (186,000 miles per second). As shown in the table below, Jibraeel[AS] could make that trip in less than 10 milliseconds.

Theoretically humans should be able to travel at rates just short of the speed of light. However, gravitational forces (accelerative force upon a mass, such as a human body) may pose limitations for such a travel, it can cause loss of consciousness. The average person can withstand a sustained force of about five Gs before slipping into unconsciousness. Pilots wearing special high-G suits and trained to flex their torso muscles to keep blood from whooshing out of their heads can still operate their aircraft at about nine Gs. Even in space shuttle, which flies at 17,500 miles per hour, except for the takeoff, once at a steady cruising speed, astronauts no more feel their speed than do passengers on a commercial airplane.[11]

Time for a Return Trip from Mecca to Jerusalem[12]

Mode of Transportation	Miles/hr	Time	
Humans	5	13	days
Race Horse	40	39	hours
Fastest Train	186	8.3	hours
Race Cars	250	6.2	hours
Jet Airliners	530	2.9	hours
Concord Jet	1,550	60	minutes
Combat Aircraft	2,000	46	minutes
Space Shuttle	17,500	5.3	minutes
Rocket	25,000	3.7	minutes
Light	670,000,000	8.3	miliseconds

So far the record speed for humans was established by Apollo 10 astronauts.[13] At this speed, it would have taken the Prophet[SAW] about four minutes for a return trip from Mecca to Jerusalem. Considering the speed Jibraeel[AS] can travel, with a lift from him, the Prophet[SAW] could have made the trip in less than five minutes.

Al-Miraj (Ascension to Heaven)

The reports regarding the Miraj has the following elements:

- Opening of chest and washing it with Zamzam water;
- Pouring of wisdom and faith from a golden tray into the Prophet[SAW]'s chest/heart;
- Ascending to the seven heavens
- Opening of the gates at the entrance of each heaven;
- Meeting some of the past Prophets[AS];
- Reaching *Sidrat-il-Muntaha* (Lote tree of; the utmost boundary), which was shrouded in indescribable colors.
- Admission into Paradise with small (tents or) walls (made) of pearls and musk floor.

Seeing Allah[ST]:

Most of the companions[RA] were of the opinion that the Prophet[SAW] did not see Allah[ST].[j] The statements of Ibn Abbas[RA] has, however, clouded the issue. He interpreted the verses of Surah Najm (53:7-18) to imply that the Prophet[SAW] saw Allah[ST].[k] 'Some versions of the report narrated from Ibn 'Abbas[RA] refers to seeing without specifying how, and others indicate that it was with the heart.' (See Appendix B). Irrespective, as Aisha[RA] pointed out, the verses of Surah An-Najm refer to the Prophet[SAW] seeing Jiraeel[AS], not Allah[ST].

Ascending through the Heavens:

The reports states that the Prophet[SAW] with Jiraeel[AS] ascended through all the seven heavens. The author in his paper titled "Seven Heavens and the Multiple Universes"[14] has explained that though there are seven universes (heavens) arranged one on top of the other like balloons inside balloons, the universe we live in, which is called *as-sama'-ad-dunya,* is the innermost universe and is the only observable universe. All of the space and time and their contents, including planets, stars, galaxies, and all other forms of matter and energy belong to this universe. Discounting the phenomenon of expanding universe, it would take Jibraeel[AS] , who can travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), about forty two billion light years to reach the end of the universe.[15] Even if he could make it, which is impossible, he could not cross the boundary since, according to the Quran, the boundary cannot be breached.[l] We can thus rule out the possibility of the Miraj in body.

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[j] 'Aa'ishah[RA] said: "Whoever told you that Muhammad[SAW] saw his Lord was lying. He said that no vision can grasp him [cf. al-An'am 6:103]…" (Narrated by al-Bukhari, al-Tawheed, 6832).

Abu Dharr[RA] said: "I asked the Messenger of Allah [SAW], 'Did you see your Lord?' He said, ' He is veiled by Light, how could I see Him.'" (Narrated by Muslim, al-Iman, 261).

[k] Ibn 'Abbas[RA] said: " 'The (Prophet's) heart belied not what he saw, and indeed he saw Him at a second descent.' [al-Najm 53:11-12] (This means that) he saw Him twice with his heart." (Narrated by Muslim, al-Iman, 258).

[l] 067.003. He Who created the seven heavens one above another: No want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of ((Allah)) Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw (*fatoor*, fissure)? 4. Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out. 5. And we have, (from of old), adorned the lowest heaven with Lamps, and We have made such (Lamps) (as) missiles to drive away the Evil Ones, and have prepared for them the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

021.032. And We have made the heavens (*as-sama'*) as a canopy well-guarded (*saqfan mahfoozan*): yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!

040.064. It is Allah Who has made for you the earth as a resting place, and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape- and made your shapes beautiful,- and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good;- such is Allah your Lord. So Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

055.007. And the Firmament (*as-sama'*) has He raised high (*rafa'*), and He has set up the Balance (of Justice),

079.027. What! Are ye the more difficult to create or the heaven (above) (*as-sama'*)? ((Allah)) hath constructed it: 28. On high hath He raised its canopy (*rafa' samkaha*), and He hath given it order (*fasawwa*) and perfection.

088.018. And at the Sky (*as-sama'*), how it is raised high (*rofayat*)?-

Non-Bodily Ascension:

There are three possibility for non-bodily Miraj: Dream, Mystical, or Near Death Experience. We will now explore which of these could it be.

Dream:

We have three major states of consciousness. We spend twenty-four hour cycle being awake, in REM or in NREM sleep. Sleep proceeds in 90-minute cycles of REM and NREM. As we fall asleep, body activity slows down. Body temperature, heart rate, breathing rate, and energy use all decrease. Brain waves get slower and bigger. REM sleep (also called dream sleep) is characterized by rapid eye movement and muscle atonia. NREM (also called deep sleep) is characterized by lack of prominent eye movement or muscle paralysis.[16]

During a normal day, when we are awake, we receive stimuli from the world around us as well as from our memory. When active, we respond more to the stimuli from the world around us. The stimuli triggers a thought process fetching relevant information from our memory and comes up with a response plan. We then decides to act or not to act upon that plan. When we are relaxing or daydreaming, most of our thoughts are triggered by internal stimuli originating from the memory. During day dreaming we mostly plan for the future or regret about the past.

When we turn off the lights and close our eyes, we descend into deep (NREM) sleep, which is characterized by large, slow brain waves, relaxed muscles and slow, deep breathing. This is a state where our consciousness is blocked (partitioned) from memory and therefore 'no thoughts, --, or bodily sensations intrude upon consciousness.'[17]

After deep sleep, dream (REM) sleep begins in which the brain becomes highly active while the body's muscles are paralyzed, and breathing and heart rate become erratic.[18] In this state we are unconscious of the world around us, but we do receive stimuli from our memory. We see a 'collection of clips, images, feelings, and memories --- (involving) elements from waking lives—like known people or familiar locations ---. While dreams are frequently interesting, --- , they aren't always positive—negative dreams, referred to as "nightmares," can create feelings of terror, anxiety, or utter despair.'[19] We cycle through deep sleep, dream sleep several times during a typical night.[20] Most of it is, however, spent in deep sleep. Longer, deeper dream periods, however, occurs toward morning.

The Quran has described some of the dreams seen by the Prophets[AS] and others:

- Ibraheem[AS] saw in his dream that he was sacrificing his son, Ismaeel[AS]. In order to fulfill his dream, he tried to sacrifice Ismaeel[AS]. Allah[ST] was so pleased that He ransomed him (Ismaeel[AS]) with a ram [m]

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[m] 037.099. He (Ibraheem) said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! 100. "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!" 101. So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. 102. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!" 103. So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah., and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), 104. We called out to him "O Abraham! 105. "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. 106. For this was obviously a trial- 107. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: 108. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times:

- Yusuf[AS] saw in his dream that eleven stars and the sun and the moon prostrating to him.[n] It manifested itself in his brothers prostrating in Yusuf[AS]'s court.[o]
- When one of the companions of Yusuf[AS] in the prison saw in his dream that he was pressing wine,[p] it manifested in him pouring out the wine for his lord to drink.[q]
- The other companion of Yusuf[AS] saw in his dream that the birds were eating bread that was his head. It manifested in him being hanged from the cross and the birds ate off his head.
- The Prophet[SAW] saw in his dream that he was performing Umrah, which later turned out to be true.[r]
- When the Pharaoh saw in his dream that seven fat cows were eaten up by seven lean cows. He also saw seven green and seven dry ears of corn.[s] It manifested into seven years of bumper crops followed by seven years of drought.[t]

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109. "Peace and salutation to Abraham!"

[n] 012. 004. Behold! Joseph said to his father: "O my father! I did see (*ra'ayto*) eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw (*ra'ayto*) them prostrate themselves to me!" 5. Said (the father): "My (dear) little son! relate not thy vision (*ro'ya*) to thy brothers, lest they concoct a plot against thee: for Satan is to man an avowed enemy!

[o] 012.100. And he (Yusuf) raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity), and they fell down in prostration, (all) before him. He said: "O my father! this is the fulfilment of my vision of old! Allah hath made it come true! He was indeed good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you (all here) out of the desert, (even) after Satan had sown enmity between me and my brothers. Verily my Lord understandeth best the mysteries of all that He planneth to do, for verily He is full of knowledge and wisdom.

[p] 012.036. Now with him there came into the prison two young men. Said one of them: "I see myself (*aranee*) (in a dream) pressing wine." said the other: "I see myself (*aranee*) (in a dream) carrying bread on my head, and birds are eating, thereof." "Tell us" (they said) "The truth and meaning thereof: for we see thou art one that doth good (to all)."

[q] 012.041. "O my two companions of the prison! As to one of you, he will pour out the wine for his lord to drink: as for the other, he will hang from the cross, and the birds will eat from off his head. (so) hath been decreed that matter whereof ye twain do enquire"... 42. And of the two, to that one whom he consider about to be saved, he said: "Mention me to thy lord." But Satan made him forget to mention him to his lord: and (Joseph) lingered in prison a few (more) years.

[r] 048. 27. Truly did Allah fulfil the vision (*ro'ya*) for His Messenger. ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah wills, with minds secure, heads shaved, hair cut short, and without fear. For He knew what ye knew not, and He granted, besides this, a speedy victory.

[s] 012.043. The king (of Egypt) said: "I do see (in a vision) (*ara'*) seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour, and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered. O ye chiefs! Expound to me my vision if it be that ye can interpret visions (*ro'ya*)."

[t] 012.046. "O Joseph!" (he said) "O man of truth! Expound to us (the dream) of seven fat kine whom seven lean ones devour, and of seven green ears of corn and (seven) others withered: that I may return to the people, and that they may understand."

012.047. (Joseph) said: "For seven years shall ye diligently sow as is your wont: and the harvests that ye reap, ye shall leave them in the ear,- except a little, of which ye shall eat. 48. "Then will come after that (period) seven dreadful (years), which will devour what ye shall have laid by in advance for them,- (all) except a little which ye shall have (specially) guarded. 49. "Then will come after that (period) a year in which the people will have abundant water, and in which they will press (wine and oil)."

In all the dreams described above, the elements of the dreams came from the real life experiences e.g. the act of slaughtering, prostrating, and pouring drink, Ismaeel[AS], fat and lean cows, the sun, the moon, and the stars, birds eating bread, etc. All these images were stored in the memory of the dreamer based on his experience. The sequence or the combinations of the images in the dream were, however, rearranged. For example, we know that unicorns do not exist, but it is possible to see it in dream since it is depicted as a white horse-like or goat-like animal with a long horn, cloven hooves, and sometimes a goat's beard.[21] All the elements of unicorn exist individually in reality, but not in one animal. We see the same pattern in the dreams described above. Cows do not eat their own kind, they chew grass. But in the dream the grass was replaced by fat cows. The sacrifice of animal in the real life was replaced by the image of Ismaeel[AS]. The sun, the moon, the stars do not prostrate, but people do prostrate. In the dream, the act of prostrating was tied with the sun, the moon, and the stars. However, the vision the Prophet[SAW] had none from this world. Most of it was ineffable.

Besides, the dreams of the Prophets[AS], though sometimes symbolic, somehow translate in the real life. Ibraheem[AS] felt that his dream must be true, so he acted upon it. Though the sun, the moon, and the stars turned out to be the father, the mother and brothers of Yusuf[AS], their brothers did prostrate in the court of Yusuf[AS]. The Prophet[SAW] did perform Umrah. However, the vision the Prophet[SAW] had was not from this world and hence could never be translated in the real life. His vision thus does not fit the pattern of a dream.

Mystical Experience:

Mystical experiences 'are generally regarded as the mechanism by which a human being can enter into the realm of God or ultimate reality, depending on the particular religion.'[22] Its objective is to attain "union with the Absolute, the Infinite, or God" by focusing mind on some thought or object of attention, or to reach a state of "nothingness" by clearing mind of all conscious thoughts, emotions, and perceptions.[23]

The Mystic, through meditation or ritual, takes off from baseline reality and progresses through a varying degree of unitary experiences giving him a subjective sensation of awe, peace, tranquility, or ecstasy. The last state is characterized 'by a sense of attaining absolute reality, union with God or the Absolute, a sense of either bliss or utter tranquility.'[24] The following are some of the salient features of the final stages of mysticism:

- A feeling of oneness or unity, variously defined.
- A strong confidence in the "reality" or "objectivity" of the experience, i.e. a conviction that it is somehow revelatory of "the truth."
- A sense of the final inapplicability to the experience conventional language, i.e. a sense that the experience is ineffable.
- A cessation of normal intellectual operations (e.g. deduction, discrimination, ratiocination, speculation, etc.) or the substitution for them of some "higher" or qualitatively different mode of intellect (e.g. intuition).
- A sense of the coincidence of opposites, of various kinds (paradoxically).
- An extraordinary strong affective tone, again of various kinds (e.g. sublime joy, utter serenity, great fear, incomparable pleasure, etc. – often an unusual combination of such as these).[25]

Mysticism, however, is achieved commonly through some sort of ritual and meditation e.g. by focusing the mind on some thought or object of attention, or by clearing mind of all conscious thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. The reported vision of the Prophet[SAW], was, however, non-voluntary. In one report it is reported that he was asleep. All the action was taken by Jibraeel[AS], the Prophet[SAW] just followed along. We thus have to rule out of the vision being a mystical experiences.

Out of Body Experience (OBE):

Whereas mystical experiences are derived voluntarily from rituals and meditation, there is another kind of experience which happens spontaneously and involuntarily and is called out of body experience (OBE). It is a sensation of consciousness leaving the body. It generally involves:

- a feeling of floating outside your body
- an altered perception of the world, such as looking down from a height
- the feeling that one is looking down at oneself from above
- a sense that what is happening is very real

Research suggests that about 10% of the healthy population experience at least one such episode in their lifetime. It is experienced in most of the world's cultures and in several medical conditions. In such an episode, the consciousness is said to be simply floating or hovering above the physical body. To date only few scientific investigations have been carried out on OBE, probably because they generally occur spontaneously, are of short duration, and happen only once or twice in a lifetime.[26]

Three types of situation may trigger spontaneous OBE. People who are on the verge of sleep, or being already asleep shortly before the experience may experience OBE, especially where the sleep may not be particularly deep (due to illness, noises in other rooms, emotional stress, exhaustion from overworking, frequent re-awakening, etc.). In most of these cases, subjects perceive themselves as being awake; about half of them note a feeling of sleep paralysis.[27]

Spontaneous OBE may also be induced due to extreme physical effort during activities such as high-altitude climbing and marathon running. A sense of bilocation may be experienced, with both ground and air-based perspectives being experienced simultaneously.[28]

Some subjects report having had an OBE at times of extreme stress either physiologically or psychologically or both e.g. severe physical trauma such as near-drownings or major surgery.[29] It may include subjective impressions of being outside the physical body, sometimes visions of deceased relatives and religious figures, and transcendence of ego and spatiotemporal boundaries.[30] The core elements of this experience are[31]:

- Feelings of peace and tranquility
- Out-of-body experience
- The dark tunnel
- Meeting others
- The realm of light

Depending upon the circumstances of the event, the specific characteristics may vary. However, the first part of the experience is usually a sense of peace and tranquility. Followed by a sense of being detached from the body (OBE) – seeing own body and hearing and seeing the people surrounding the body. ' The next stage consists of entering a dark "tunnel" or vastness. It has been described as empty, space, or nothingness, and has been likened to describing the end of the

universe. After the "tunnel" experience, subject may perceive a light towards which they are traveling. This light has been described as golden, brilliant, and of ineffable beauty. The light often takes on a symbolic meaning that is usually culturally dependent. For example, it is frequently identified as God, heaven, or other spiritual entities, depending on the religious belief or culture of the person. --- Entering the light appears to be the final stage of NDE. --- (T)here is often a presence associated with the light. This presence is not usually directly perceived, but it is sensed and understood by the experiencer.'[32]

Comparing the core of this OBE with the description reported about *Al-Miraj* (Appendix A), we see the following elements of commonaly:

- Experienced on the verge of sleep, or being already asleep: It is reported that while the Prophet[SAW] was lying in Al-Hatim or Al-Hijr, suddenly someone (Jibraeel[AS]) came to him and cut his body open from his throat to his pubic area. The state the Prophet[SAW] was in, was the most conducive to trigger OBE.
- OBE: It is reported that the Prophet[SAW] saw that Jibraeel[AS] took out his heart, washed it with Zamzam water. He then filled it with belief and wisdom and returned it to its original place. He then closed the heart. The Prophet[SAW] did not say that he was out of his body, but the description fits an OBE episode. He was watching all that was happening to his body. He could even tell from where to where his chest was cut. It was as if someone was doing an open heart surgery on him. Many OBEs have been reported under such circumstances.
- Tunnel /Vastness / Space: The Prophet[SAW] then talks about passing through seven heavens. After reaching the end of each heavens, he had to pass through a gate to enter the next heaven. The people experiencing OBE have reported reaching the end of the universe. The Prophet[SAW] described experiencing seven ends of universe.
- Light: The Prophet[SAW] then reported seeing a bright light.[u] Though he denied seeing Allah[ST], people experiencing light have frequently identified it with God, heaven, or other spiritual entities.
- Meeting the Dead: The Prophet[SAW] also reported meeting some of the Prophets[AS] of the past.
- Paradise: The Prophet[SAW] also reported reaching *Sidrat-il-Muntaha*, which was shrouded in indescribable colors. He then reported to be admitted into Paradise.

Based on the comparison we can speculate that what the Prophet[SAW] experienced was a superlative form of OBE, where the consciousness (soul) separates from the body and observes not just the body, but things which are beyond imagination.

Conclusion

The analysis suggests that Al-Isra could have been a bodily experience. Technically, with a little lift from Jibraeel[AS], who can travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it was possible for the Prophet[SAW] to physically travel to Jerusalem and return to Mecca in less than five minutes.

Al-Miraj, on the other hand, could not have been a bodily or mystical experience. It could not even be a dream. It fits the core elements of a superlative form of out of body experience (OBE),

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[u] Muslim recorded that Abu Dharr said, "I asked the Messenger of Allah , `Have you seen your Lord' He said, «نُورٌ أَنَّى أَرَاه» (How can I see Him since there was a light)" In another narration, the Prophet said, «رَأَيْتُ نُورًا»

(See Appendix B)

which is beyond imagination. The state he was in was very conducive to trigger such an OBE. While the body stayed where he was sleeping, his conscience (soul) saw things which fits the pattern of an OBE e.g. looking at what Jibraeel[AS] was doing with his body, passing through a huge space (heaven), meeting the dead (some of the Prophets), and seeing a bright light and the paradise.

About the Author:

The author is a chemical engineer by profession and a writer and a poet by avocation.
He is the published author of the following books:

1. "*Secrets of Angels, Demons, Satan, and Jinns – Decoding their Nature through Quran and Science,"*
2. *"Atom to Adam – How, When and Where in the Light of Quran, Bible and Science (A Study of Human Origin),"*
3. *"Hunting to Cloning – Unearthing Civilizations through Quran,"*
4. *"Lessons from the Qur'an,"*
5. *"Lessons from the Qur'an Volume II,"*
6. *"Quranic Knowledge - Basic Information about the Holy Quran with Questions and Answers,"*
7. *"A Scientific Approach to the Quran,"*
8. *"The Qur'an – What's in it for me? An Action Driven Commentary,"* and
9. "Touching God – A Quranic Approach,"
10. "Selected Advice from the Quran,"
11. *"Divided We Prosper – A Humorous Reflection on Muslim Cultural Practices."*

He has published quite a few papers on Islamic issues in Academia.edu, the Charleston Gazette, Charleston, West Virginia, and Houston Chronicle, Houston, Texas. He possesses Master of Science degrees in Chemical Engineering and has Professional Engineers license from the State of Texas. His web address is MahmoodJawaid.com and e-mail address is mnajawaid@yahoo.com.

Appendix A

Reports in Hadeeth

Narrated by Abbas bin Malik

(3207) Narrated Malik bin Sa'sa'a[33]: The Prophet, pbuh, said, "While I was beside the House (Kabah) in a state midway between sleep and wakefulness, (an angel recognized me) as the man lying between two men. A golden tray full of wisdom and belief was brought to me and my body was cut open from the throat to the lower part of the abdomen and then my abdomen was washed with Zamzam water and (my heart was) filled with wisdom and belief. Al-Buraq, a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me and I set out with Jibril (Gabriel). When I reached the nearest heaven, Jibril said to the gatekeeper of the heaven, "Open the gate." The gatekeeper said, "Has he been called?" Jibril said, "Yes". Then it was said, "He is welcome. What a wonderful visit his is!" Then I met Adam and greeted him and he said, "You are welcome, O son and a Prophet." Then we ascended to the second heaven. It was asked, "Who is it?" Jibril said, "Jibril" It was said, "Who is with you?" He said, "Muhammad (pbuh)". It was asked, "Has he been sent for?" He said, "Yes". It was said, "He is welcome. What a wonderful visit his is!" Then I met Isa (Jesus) and Yahya (John) who said, "You are welcome O brother and a Prophet." Then we ascended to the third heaven. It was asked, "Who is it?" Jibril said, "Jibril" It was said, "Who is with you?" He said, "Muhammad." It was asked, "Has he been sent for?" He said, "Yes". It was said, "He is welcome. What a wonderful visit his is!" (The Prophet, pbuh, added) "There I met Yusuf (Joseph) and greeted him, and he replied, "You are welcome, O brother and a Prophet!" Then we ascended to the fourth heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met Idris and greeted him. He said, "You are welcome, O brother and a Prophet." Then we ascended to the fifth heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in previous heavens. There I met and greeted Harun (Aaron) who said, "You are welcome, O brother and a Prophet." Then we ascended to the sixth heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in previous heavens. There I met and greeted Musa (Moses) who said, "You are welcome, O brother and a Prophet." When I proceeded on, he started weeping and on being asked why he was weeping, he said, "O Lord! Followers of this youth who was sent after me will enter Paradise in greater number than my followers." Then we ascended to the seventh heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met and greeted Ibrahim (Abraham) who said, "You are welcome, O son and a Prophet." Then I was shown Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mur (i.e. Allah's House). I asked Jibril about it and he said, "This is Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mur where seventy thousand angels perform Salat (prayer) daily, and when they leave they never return to it (but always fresh batch comes into it daily)." Then I was shown Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (i.e. the lote-tree of the utmost boundary) and I saw its Nabiq fruits which resembled the clay jugs of Hajar (i.e. a town in Arabia), and its leaves were like the ears of elephants, and four rivers originated at its root, two of them were apparent and two were hidden. I asked Jibril about those rivers and he said, "The two hidden rivers are in Paradise, and the apparent ones are the Nile and the Euphrates." Then fifty Salat (prayer) were enjoined on me. I descended till I met Musa who asked me, "What have you done?" I said, "Fifty salat have been enjoined on me." He said, "I know the people better than you because I had the hardest experience to bring Bani Israel to obedience. Your followers cannot put up with such obligations. So, go back to your Lord and request Him (to reduce the number of Salat)." I returned and requested Allah (for reduction) and He made it forty. I returned and (met Musa) and had a similar discussion, and then returned again to Allah for reduction, and He made

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it thirty, then twenty, then ten, and then I came to Musa who repeated the same advice. Ultimately Allah reduced it to five. When I came to Musa again, he said, "What have you done?" I said, "Allah has made it five only." He repeated the same advice but I said that I surrendered (to Allah's Final Order)" Allah's Messenger, pbuh, was addressed by Allah, "I have decreed My Obligation and have reduced the burden on My slaves, and I shall reward a single good deed as if it were ten good deeds."

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Narrated `Abbas bin Malik[34]: Malik bin Sasaa said that Allah's Apostle described to them his Night Journey saying, While I was lying in Al-Hatim or Al-Hijr, suddenly someone came to me and cut my body open from here to here. I asked Al-Jarud who was by my side, What does he mean? He said, It means from his throat to his pubic area, or said, From the top of the chest. The Prophet further said, <u>He then took out my heart. Then a gold tray of Belief was brought to me and my heart was washed and was filled (with Belief) and then returned to its original place.</u>

Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me. (On this Al-Jarud asked, Was it the Buraq, O Abu Hamza? I (i.e. Anas) replied in the affirmative). The Prophet said, The animal's step (was so wide that it) reached the farthest point within the reach of the animal's sight.

<u>I was carried on it, and Gabriel set out with me till we reached the nearest heaven.</u> When he asked for <u>the gate to be opened</u>, it was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has Muhammad been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!' <u>The gate was opened, and when I went over the first heaven</u>, <u>I saw Adam there.</u> Gabriel said (to me). 'This is your father, Adam; pay him your greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious son and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me till we reached <u>the second heaven</u>. Gabriel asked for <u>the gate to be opened</u>. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel answered in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!' The gate was opened. When I went over the second heaven, <u>there I saw Yahya (i.e. John) and `Isa (i.e. Jesus)</u> who were cousins of each other. Gabriel said (to me), 'These are John and Jesus; pay them your greetings.' So I greeted them and both of them returned my greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to <u>the third heaven and asked for its gate to be opened</u>. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed, what an excellent visit his is!' The gate was opened, and when I went over the third heaven <u>there I saw Joseph</u>. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is Joseph; pay him your greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to <u>the fourth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened</u>. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed, what an excel lent visit his is!' The gate was opened, and when I went over the fourth heaven, <u>there I saw Idris</u>. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is Idris; pay him your greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to <u>the fifth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened</u>. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked. 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said He is welcomed, what an excellent visit his is! So when I went over the fifth heaven, <u>there I saw Harun (i.e. Aaron)</u>, Gabriel said, (to me). This is Aaron; pay him your greetings.' I

greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to the sixth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked. 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. It was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!' When I went (over the sixth heaven), there I saw Moses. Gabriel said (to me),' This is Moses; pay him your greeting. So I greeted him and he returned the greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.' When I left him (i.e. Moses) he wept. Someone asked him, 'What makes you weep?' Moses said, 'I weep because after me there has been sent (as Prophet) a young man whose followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than my followers.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to the seventh heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked,' Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!' So when I went (over the seventh heaven), there I saw Abraham. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is your father; pay your greetings to him.' So I greeted him and he returned the greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious son and pious Prophet.'

Then I was made to ascend to Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (i.e. the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary) Behold! Its fruits were like the jars of Hajr (i.e. a place near Medina) and its leaves were as big as the ears of elephants. Gabriel said, 'This is the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary) . Behold ! There ran four rivers, two were hidden and two were visible, I asked, 'What are these two kinds of rivers, O Gabriel?' He replied,' As for the hidden rivers, they are two rivers in Paradise and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates.'

Then Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mur (i.e. the Sacred House) was shown to me and a container full of wine and another full of milk and a third full of honey were brought to me. I took the milk. Gabriel remarked, 'This is the Islamic religion which you and your followers are following.'

Then the prayers were enjoined on me: They were fifty prayers a day. When I returned, I passed by Moses who asked (me), 'What have you been ordered to do?' I replied, 'I have been ordered to offer fifty prayers a day.' Moses said, 'Your followers cannot bear fifty prayers a day, and by Allah, I have tested people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israel (in vain). Go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your followers' burden.' So I went back, and Allah reduced ten prayers for me. Then again I came to Moses, but he repeated the same as he had said before. Then again I went back to Allah and He reduced ten more prayers. When I came back to Moses he said the same, I went back to Allah and He ordered me to observe ten prayers a day. When I came back to Moses, he repeated the same advice, so I went back to Allah and was ordered to observe five prayers a day. When I came back to Moses, he said, 'What have you been ordered?' I replied, 'I have been ordered to observe five prayers a day.' He said, 'Your followers cannot bear five prayers a day, and no doubt, I have got an experience of the people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israel, so go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your follower's burden.' I said, 'I have requested so much of my Lord that I feel ashamed, but I am satisfied now and surrender to Allah's Order.' When I left, I heard a voice saying, 'I have passed My Order and have lessened the burden of My Worshipers.

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Narrated by Abu Dharr:

(3342) Narrated Anas[35]: Abu Dhar used to say that Allah's Messenger, pbuh, said, "While I was at Makkah, the roof of my house was opened and Jibril (Gabriel) descended, opened my chest, and washed it with Zamzam water. Then he brought a golden tray full of wisdom and faith, and having poured its contents into my chest, he closed it. Then he took my hand and ascended with me to the heaven. When Jibril reached the nearest heaven, he said to the gatekeeper of the heaven, "Open (the gate)." The gatekeeper asked, "Who is it?" Jibril ansered, "Jibril." He asked, "Is there anyone with you?" Jibril replied, 'Muhammad (PBUH) is with me." He asked, "Has he been called?" Jibril said, "Yes." So, the gate was opened and we went over the nearest heaven, and there we saw a man sitting with Aswida (a large number of people) on his right and Aswida on his left. When he looked towards his right, he laughed and when he looked towards his left he wept. He said (to me), "Welcome, O pious Prophet and pious son." I said, "Who is this man O Jibril?" Jibril replied, "He is Adam, and the people on his right and left are the souls of his offspring. Those on the right are the people of Paradise, and those on the left are the people of the (Hell) Fire. So, when he looks to the right, he laughs, and when he looks to the left he weeps." Then Jibril ascended with me till he reached the second heaven and said to its gatekeeper. "Open (the gate)." The gatekeeper said to him the same as the gatekeeper of the first heaven had said, and he opened the gate."

Anas added: Abu Dhar mentioned that the Prophet, pbuh, met Idris, Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus) and Ibrahim (Abraham) over the heavens, but he did not specify their places (i.e. on which heaven each of them was) but he mentioned that he (the Prophet, pbuh) had met Adam on the nearest heaven, and Ibrahim on the sixth. Anas said, "When Jibril and the Prophet, pbuh, passed by Idris, the latter said, "Welcome, O pious Prophet and pious brother!" the Prophet, pbuh, asked, "Who is he?" Jibril said, "He is Idris." The Prophet, pbuh, added, "Then I passed by Musa who said, 'Welcome, O pious Prophet and pious brother!' I said, "Who is he?" Jibril said, "He is Musa." Then I passed by Isa who said, "Welcome, O pious Prophet and pious brother!" I said, "Who is he?" He replied, "He is Isa." Then I passed by the Prophet Ibrahim who said, "Welcome, O pious Prophet and pious son!" I said, "Who is he?" Jibril replied, "He is Ibrahim."

Narrated Ibn Abbas and Abu Haiyya Al-Ansari: The Prophet, pbuh, said, "Then Jibril ascended with me to a place where I heard the creaking of the pens." Ibn Hazm and Anas bin Malik state that the Prophet, pbuh, said, "Allah enjoined fifty Salat (Prayer) on me. When I returned with this order of Allah, I passed by Musa who asked me, 'what has Allah enjoined on your followers?' I replied, 'He has enjoined fifty Salat on them.' On that Musa said to me, 'Go back to your Lord (and appeal for reduction), for your followers will not be able to bear it.' So I returned to my Lord and asked for some reduction, and He reduced it to half. When I passed by Musa again and informed him about it, he once more said to me, ' Go back to your Lord, for your followers will not be able to bear it.' So, I returned to my Lord similarly as before, and half of it was reduced. I again passed by Musa and said to me, 'Go back to your Lord, for your followers will not be able to bear it.' I again returned to my Lord and He said, "these are five (salat) and they are all (equal to) fifty (in reward), for My Word does not change." I returned to Musa, he again told me to return to my Lord (for further reduction) but I said to him, 'I feel shy of asking my Lord now.' Then Jibril took me till we reached Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (i.e. lote tree of utmost boundry) which was shrouded in colours indescribable. Then I was admitted into Paradise where I found small tents (made) of pearls and its earth was musk (a kind of perfume).

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Narrated Abu Dhar[36]: Allah's Apostle said, While I was at Mecca the roof of my house was opened and Gabriel descended, opened my chest, and washed it with Zamzam water. Then he brought a golden tray full of wisdom and faith and having poured its contents into my chest, he closed it.

Then he took my hand and ascended with me to the nearest heaven, when I reached the nearest heaven, Gabriel said to the gatekeeper of the heaven, 'Open (the gate).' The gatekeeper asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered: 'Gabriel.' He asked, 'Is there anyone with you?' Gabriel replied, 'Yes, Muhammad I is with me.' He asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel said, 'Yes.' So the gate was opened and we went over the nearest heaven and there we saw a man sitting with some people on his right and some on his left. When he looked towards his right, he laughed and when he looked toward his left he wept. Then he said, 'Welcome! O pious Prophet and pious son.' I asked Gabriel, 'Who is he?' He replied, 'He is Adam and the people on his right and left are the souls of his offspring. Those on his right are the people of Paradise and those on his left are the people of Hell and when he looks towards his right he laughs and when he looks towards his left he weeps.'

Then he ascended with me till he reached the second heaven and he (Gabriel) said to its gatekeeper, 'Open (the gate).' The gatekeeper said to him the same as the gatekeeper of the first heaven had said and he opened the gate.

Anas said: Abu Dhar added that the Prophet met Adam, Idris, Moses, Jesus and Abraham, he (Abu Dhar) did not mention on which heaven they were but he mentioned that he (the Prophet) met Adam on the nearest heaven and Abraham on the sixth heaven. Anas said, When Gabriel along with the Prophet passed by Idris, the latter said, 'Welcome! O pious Prophet and pious brother.' The Prophet asked, 'Who is he?' Gabriel replied, 'He is Idris. The Prophet added, I passed by Moses and he said, 'Welcome! O pious Prophet and pious brother.' I asked Gabriel, 'Who is he?' Gabriel replied, 'He is Moses.' Then I passed by Jesus and he said, 'Welcome! O pious brother and pious Prophet.' I asked, 'Who is he?' Gabriel replied, 'He is Jesus. Then I passed by Abraham and he said, 'Welcome! O pious Prophet and pious son.' I asked Gabriel, 'Who is he?' Gabriel replied, 'He is Abraham. The Prophet added, 'Then Gabriel ascended with me to a place where I heard the creaking of the pens.

Ibn Hazm and Anas bin Malik said: The Prophet said, Then Allah enjoined fifty prayers on my followers when I returned with this order of Allah, I passed by Moses who asked me, 'What has Allah enjoined on your followers?' I replied, 'He has enjoined fifty prayers on them.' Moses said, 'Go back to your Lord (and appeal for reduction) for your followers will not be able to bear it.' (So I went back to Allah and requested for reduction) and He reduced it to half. When I passed by Moses again and informed him about it, he said, 'Go back to your Lord as your followers will not be able to bear it.' So I returned to Allah and requested for further reduction and half of it was reduced. I again passed by Moses and he said to me: 'Return to your Lord, for your followers will not be able to bear it. So I returned to Allah and He said, 'These are five prayers and they are all (equal to) fifty (in reward) for My Word does not change.' I returned to Moses and he told me to go back once again. I replied, 'Now I feel shy of asking my Lord again.'

Then Gabriel took me till we ''reached Sidrat-il-Muntaha (Lote tree of; the utmost boundary) which was shrouded in colors, indescribable. Then I was admitted into Paradise where I found small (tents or) walls (made) of pearls and its earth was of musk.

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Narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah

Narrated Jabir bin `Abdullah: That he heard Allah's Apostle saying, When the people of Quraish did not believe me (i.e. the story of my Night Journey), I stood up in Al-Hijr and Allah displayed Jerusalem in front of me, and I began describing it to them while I was looking at it.[37]

Narrated by Ibn Abbas

Narrated Ibn `Abbas: Regarding the Statement of Allah And We granted the vision (Ascension to the heavens) which We made you see (as an actual eye witness) was only made as a trial for the people. (17.60) Ibn `Abbas added: The sights which Allah's Apostle was shown on the Night Journey when he was taken to Bait-ul-Maqdis (i.e. Jerusalem) were actual sights, (not dreams). And the Cursed Tree (mentioned) in the Qur'an is the tree of Zaqqum (itself) .[38]

'At last Muhammad reached to the destination from where onwards even Gabriel was not able to go beyond, place called Sidrat-ul-Muntaha. There prophet met to God as face to face & spoke to him, Allah promised that each and every sin of Muslims will be forgiven unless they commit the sin of shirk. In this visit prayer of five times told as obligatory for the Muslims. Prophet was shown the paradise & hell both.'[39]

Narrated Abu Hurairah

(4709) Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger, pbuh, was presented with two cups, one containing wine and the other containing milk on the night of his Journey by Night at Jerusalem. He looked at both and took the milk. Jibril (Gabriel) said, "Thanks to Allah Who guided you to the Fitrah (i.e. Islam); if you had taken the wine, your followers would have gone astray."[40]

Appendix B

The Prophet[SAW] Seeing Allah[ST41]

Most of the Sahabah were of the view that the Prophet[SAW] did not see Allah[ST] with his eyes on the night of the Miraj.

'Aa'ishah[RA] said: "Whoever told you that Muhammad[SAW] saw his Lord was lying. He said that no vision can grasp him [cf. al-An'am 6:103]…" (Narrated by al-Bukhari, al-Tawheed, 6832).

Abu Dharr[RA] said: "I asked the Messenger of Allah [SAW], 'Did you see your Lord?' He said, ' He is veiled by Light, how could I see Him.'" (Narrated by Muslim, al-Iman, 261).

Ibn 'Abbas[RA] said: " 'The (Prophet's) heart belied not what he saw, and indeed he saw Him at a second descent.' [al-Najm 53:11-12] (This means that) he saw Him twice with his heart." (Narrated by Muslim, al-Iman, 258).

Ibn al-Qayyim said: " 'Uthmaan ibn Sa'eed al-Daarimi said in his book al-Ru'yah that there was consensus among the Sahabah that he [the Prophet[SAW] did not see his Lord on the night of the Mi'raaj. Some of them excluded Ibn 'Abbas[RA] and said that he was not one of those who said that. Our Shaykh says that this does not go against the facts, for Ibn 'Abbas[RA] did not say that he saw Him with the eyes in his head, and Ahmad relied upon this in one of the two reports narrated from him, where he says that he saw Him but he did not say that that was with the eyes in his head. The wording used by Ahmad is the same as that used by Ibn 'Abbas[RA]. What indicates that what our Shaykh said about the meaning of the hadeeth of Abu Dharr[RA] is correct is the fact that in another hadeeth he said that His veil is Light. And Allah knows best what the Light is that is mentioned in the hadeeth of Abu Dharr[RA] where it says, 'I saw Light.'" (Ijtimaa' al-Juyoosh al-Islamiyyah, vol. 1, p. 12

Shaykh al-Islam[ra] said: "Chapter: with regard to seeing Allah, what was proven in al-Saheeh from Ibn 'Abbas is that he said: 'Muhammad saw his Lord with his heart twice, and 'Aa'ishah[RA] denied that he had seen Him. Some people reconciled these two reports by saying that 'Aa'ishah[RA] denied that he saw Him with his eyes and Ibn 'Abbas[RA] affirmed that he saw Him with his heart. Some versions of the report narrated from Ibn 'Abbas[RA] refers to seeing without specifying how, and others indicate that it was with the heart. Sometimes he says that Muhammad saw his Lord, and sometimes he says that Muhammad saw Him. There is no clear statement from Ibn 'Abbas which says that he saw Him with his eyes. Similarly Imam Ahmad sometimes says that he saw Him and sometimes says that he saw Him with his heart. No one whom Ahmad heard said that he saw Him with his eyes. But some of his companions heard some of the words that did not specify how, and understood from that that he had seen Him with his eyes, just as some people heard the words of Ibn 'Abbas that did not specify how, and understood from that that he had seen Him with his eyes. But there is nothing in the evidence to prove that he saw Him with his eyes, and that was not narrated from any of the Sahabah. There is nothing in the Qur'aan or Sunnah to indicate that, rather the saheeh texts which indicate that he did not see Him are more definitive. In Saheeh Muslim it is narrated that Abu Dharr[RA] said: 'I asked the Messenger of Allaah[SAW], "Did you see your Lord?" He said, "He is veiled with Light, how could I see Him?"' And Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

> 'Glorified (and Exalted) be He (Allah) [above all that (evil) they associate with Him] Who took His slave (Muhammad) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haraam (at Makkah) to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in

order that We might show him (Muhammad) of Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.)' [al-Isra' 17:1]

If he had seen Him with his own eyes, that He would have mentioned that. The same applies to the words "Will you then dispute with him (Muhammad) about what he saw [during the Mi'raaj]?" [al-Najm 53:12 – interpretation of the meaning]. If he had seen Him with his own eyes, that would have been mentioned.

It is proven from the saheeh texts and from the consensus of the salaf (first generations) of this ummah that no one can see Allah[ST] with his eyes in this world, with the exception of the claim made by some that our Prophet Muhammad[SAW] alone saw Him. But they are agreed that the believers will see Allah[ST] on the Day of Resurrection with their own eyes just as they see the sun and the moon (in this world)."

Surah An-Najm (53:11-18)[42]

﴿وَهُوَ بِالاٌّفُقِ الاٌّعْلَى ﴾

(While he was in the highest part of the horizon.) meaning, Jibril rose to the highest part of the horizon, according to `Ikrimah and several others; `Ikrimah said, "The highest horizon where the morning comes from." Mujahid said, "It is (the place of) sunrise." Qatadah said, "That from which the day comes." Ibn Zayd and several others said similarly. Imam Ahmad recorded that Abdullah bin Mas`ud said, "The Messenger of Allah saw Jibril in his original shape having six hundred wings, each wing filling the side of the horizon, with a colorful array, and pearls and rubies falling from each wing as much as only Allah knows." Only Imam Ahmad collected this Hadith. Imam Ahmad recorded that `Abdullah bin `Abbas said, "The Prophet asked Jibril to appear himself to him in his original shape and Jibril said to him, `Invoke your Lord.' The Prophet invoked his Lord the Exalted and Most Honored, and a great huge figure appeared to him from the east and kept rising and spreading. When the Prophet saw Jibril in his original shape, he was knocked unconscious. Jibril came down and revived the Prophet and wiped the saliva off of his cheeks."' Only Ahmad collected this Hadith.

Meaning of "at a distance of two bows' length or less:

Allah's statement,

﴿فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى ﴾

(And was at a distance of two bows` length or less.) means, Jibril came closer to Muhammad when Jibril was descending to him on earth. At that time, the distance between them became only two bow lengths, when the bows are extended to full length, according to Mujahid and Qatadah. It was said that the meaning here is the distance between the bow's string and its wood center. Allah's statement,

﴿أَوْ أَدْنَى﴾

(or less) indicates that the distance was as only as far described, not more. This type of usage is found in several instances in the Qur'an, such as,

﴿ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ ذلِكَ فَهِىَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً﴾

(Then, after that, your hearts were hardened and became as stones or even worse in hardness.)(2:74) The Ayah says that their hearts became not softer than rocks, but as hard and difficult as rocks, and more. There is a similar Ayah,

﴿يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً﴾

(fear men as they fear Allah or even more.)(4:77), and Allah's statement,

﴿وَأَرْسَلْنَهُ إِلَى مِاْئَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ ﴾

(And We sent him to hundred thousand (people) or even more.)(37:147), indicating that they were not less than a hundred thousand, but that amount or more. Therefore, this verifies the facts mentioned, leaving no doubt or means of refute. Similarly, Allah said,

﴿فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى ﴾

(And was at a distance of two bow lengths or less.) We stated before that it was Jibril who came down near the Prophet , according to `A'ishah, the Mother of the faithful, `Abdullah bin Mas`ud, Abu Dharr and Abu Hurayrah. ~~We will mention their statements about this soon afterwards, Allah willing.~~ Ibn Jarir recorded that `Abdullah bin Mas`ud said about this Ayah,

﴿فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى ﴾

(And was at a distance of two bow lengths or less.) "Allah's Messenger said,

«رَأَيْتُ جِبْرِيلَ لَهُ سِتُّمِائَةِ جَنَاح»

(I saw Jibril; he had six hundred wings.)" Al-Bukhari recorded that Talq bin Ghannam said that Za'idah said that Ash-Shaybani said, "I asked Zirr about the Ayah,

﴿فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى – فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَآ أَوْحَى ﴾

(And was at a distance of two bow lengths or less. So (Allah) revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.) Zirr said, "Abdullah narrated to us that Muhammad saw Jibril having six hundred wings." Allah's statement,

﴿فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَآ أَوْحَى ﴾

(So he revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.) means, Jibril conveyed to Allah's servant Muhammad whatever he conveyed. Or, the meaning here could be: Allah revealed to His servant Muhammad whatever He revealed through Jibril. Both meanings are correct. Sa`id bin Jubayr said about Allah's statement,

﴿فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَآ أَوْحَى ﴾

(So He revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.) "Allah revealed to him,

﴿أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيماً﴾

(Did He not find you an orphan.)(93:6), and,

﴿وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ﴾

(And have We not raised high your fame)(94:4)" Someone else said, "Allah revealed to the Prophet that the Prophets will not enter Paradise until he enters it first, and the nations will not enter it until his Ummah enters it first."

Allah said next,

﴿مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى – أَفَتُمَرُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى ﴾

(The heart lied not in what he saw. Will you then dispute with him about what he saw) Muslim recorded from Ibn `Abbas about:

﴿مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى ﴾

(The heart lied not in what he saw), and,

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى ﴾

(And indeed he saw him at a second descent.) "He saw Allah twice in his heart." Simak reported a similar from `Ikrimah from Ibn `Abbas. Abu Salih, As-Suddi and several others said similarly that the Prophet saw Allah twice in his heart. Masruq said, "I went to `A'ishah and asked her, `Did Muhammad see his Lord' She said, `You said something that caused my hair to rise!' I said, `Behold!' and recited this Ayah,

﴿لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ ءَايَتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى ﴾

(Indeed he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord.) She said, `Where did your mind wander It was Jibril. Whoever says to you that Muhammad saw his Lord, or hid any part of what he was commanded (i.e., Allah's Message), or knew any of the five things which only Allah knows,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ﴾

(Verily, Allah, with Him is the knowledge of the Hour, He sends down the rain…)(31:34), Then he invents a great lie against Allah! The Prophet only saw Jibril twice, in his original shape, once near Sidrat Al-Muntaha and another time in Ajyad (in Makkah) while Jibril had six hundred wings that covered the horizon."' Muslim recorded that Abu Dharr said, "I asked the Messenger of Allah , `Have you seen your Lord' He said,

«نُورٌ أَنَّى أَرَاه»

(How can I see Him since there was a light)" In another narration, the Prophet said,

«رَأَيْتُ نُورًا»

(I only saw a light.) Allah's statement,

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى – عِندَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنتَهَى – عِندَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى ﴾

(And indeed he saw him at a second descent. Near Sidrat Al-Muntaha.) "The Messenger of Allah said,

«رَأَيْتُ جِبْرِيلَ وَلَهُ سِتُّمِائَةِ جَنَاحٍ يَنْتَثِرُ مِنْ رِيشِهِ التَّهَاوِيلُ مِنَ الدُّرِّ وَالْيَاقُوت»

(I saw Jibril while he had six hundred wings and a colorful array of pearls and rubies falling from the feathers of his wings.)" This Hadith has a good, strong chain of narration. Ahmad also recorded that `Abdullah ﴾Ibn Mas`ud﴿ said, "The Messenger of Allah saw Jibril in his original shape while Jibril had six hundred wings, each wing covering the side of the horizon. From his wings, precious stones were dropping of which only Allah has knowledge." This Hadith has a good chain of narration. Imam Ahmad recorded that `Abdullah bin Mas`ud said, "The Messenger of Allah said,

«رَأَيْتُ جِبْرِيلَ عَلَى سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى وَلَهُ سِتُّمِائَةِ جَنَاح»

(I saw Jibril over Sidrat Al-Muntaha while he had six hundred wings.)" One of the subnarrators of the Hadith asked `Asim about Jibril's wings and `Asim refused to elaborate. So some of his companions were asked and one of them said, "Each wing was covering what is between the east and the west." This Hadith has a good chain of narration. Imam Ahmad recorded that Ibn Mas`ud said that Allah's Messenger said:

«أَتَانِي جِبْرِيلُ فِي خُضْرٍ مُعَلَّقٍ بِهِ الدُّر»

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(Jibril came to me wearing green with pearls hanging down.) This Hadith has a good chain of narration. Imam Ahmad recorded that `Amir said that Masruq asked `A'ishah, "O Mother of the faithful, has Muhammad seen his Lord, the Exalted and Most Honored" She said, "Glorious is Allah! My hair is standing on end because of what you said. Three matters, if one tells you about any of them, will have lied. Whoever tells you that Muhammad has seen his Lord, will have lied." She then recited these two Ayat,

﴿لاَّ تُدْرِكُهُ الاٌّبْصَرُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الاٌّبْصَرَ﴾

(No vision can grasp Him, but He grasps all vision.)(6:103), and,

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلاَّ وَحْياً أَوْ مِن وَرَآءِ حِجَابٍ﴾

(It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation, or from behind a veil.)(42:51) She went one, "And whoever tells you that Muhammad knew what the morrow will bring, will have uttered a lie." She then recited,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الأٌّرْحَامِ﴾

(Verily, Allah, with Him is the knowledge of the Hour, He sends down the rain, and knows that which is in the wombs.)(31:34) `A'ishah said, "And whoever tells you that Muhammad has hidden any part of the Message will have lied," and she then recited this Ayah,

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ﴾

(O Messenger proclaim which has been sent down to you from your Lord.)(5:67).She went one, "However, he saw Jibril twice in his original shape." Imam Ahmad also recorded that Masruq said, "I asked `A'ishah, `Did not Allah say,

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ بِالاٌّفُقِ الْمُبِينِ ﴾

(And indeed he saw him in the clear horizon.)(81:23), and,

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى ﴾

(And indeed he saw him at a second descent)' She said, `I was the first among this Ummah to ask Allah's Messenger about it. He said,

«إِنَّمَا ذَاكَ جِبْرِيل»

(That was Jibril.) He only saw him twice in his actual and real figure. He saw Jibril descend from heaven to earth and was so huge that he covered the whole horizon between the sky and earth.)"' This Hadith is recorded in the Two Sahihs via Ash-Sha`bi.

__Angels, Light and colors covered Sidrat Al-Muntaha__

Allah said,

﴿إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى ﴾

(When that covered the lote tree which did cover it!) We mentioned before, in the Hadiths about Al-Isra' that the angels, Allah's Light, and spectacular colors covered the Sidrah. Imam Ahmad recorded that `Abdullah bin Mas`ud said, "When the Messenger of Allah was taken on the Isra' journey, he ascended to Sidrat Al-Muntaha, which is in the seventh heaven. There everything terminates that ascends from the earth and is held there, and terminates everything that descends from above it is held there,

﴿إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى ﴾

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(When that covered the lote tree which did cover it!) He said, “Golden butterflies. The Messenger of Allah was given three things: He was given the five prayers, he was given the concluding verses of Surat Al-Baqarah (2:284-286), and remission of serious sins for those among his Ummah who do not associate anything with Allah.” Muslim collected this Hadith. Allah’s statement,

﴿مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى ﴾

(The sight turned not aside, nor it transgressed beyond the limit.) indicates that the Prophet’s sight did not turn right or left, according to `Ibn `Abbas,

﴿وَمَا طَغَى﴾

(nor it transgressed beyond the limit.) not exceeding what has been ordained for it. This is a tremendous quality that demonstrates the Prophet’s firm obedience to Allah, because he only did what was commanded and did ask beyond what he was given. Allah’s statement,

﴿لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ ءَايَتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى ﴾

(Indeed he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord.) is similar to another Ayah,

﴿لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ ءَايَتِنَآ﴾

(In order that We might show him of Our Ayat.)(17:1), meaning, signs that testify to Allah’s might and greatness. Relying on these two Ayat, some scholars of Ahl us-Sunnah said that the Prophet did not see Allah during the Isra’ journey, because Allah said,

﴿لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ ءَايَتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى ﴾

(Indeed he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord.) They said that, had the Prophet seen his Lord, Allah would have conveyed this news and the Prophet would have narrated it to the people.

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Top Attractions in New York City

1. The National 9/11 Memorial & Museum
2. The Metropolitan Museum of Art
3. Central Park
4. Empire State Building

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5. Top of the Rock
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(3887) Al-Mi'raj (i.e., Ascension of the Prophet to the heavens with his body and soul)

(Sahih Al Bukhari 1: Chapter 64, Hadith 3887

https://www.islamicfinder.org/hadith/bukhari/merits-of-al-ansar/?page=12

[archived on April 3, 2021])

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(349) How As-Salat (the prayer) was prescribed on the night of Al-Isra (miraculous night journey) of the Prophet to Jerusalem (and then to the heavens)

(Sahih Al Bukhari 1: Chapter 8, Hadith 349;

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(3886) The narration about Al-Isra (Journey by Night)

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(3888) Al-Mi'raj (i.e., Ascension of the Prophet to the heavens with his body and soul)

(Sahih Al Bukhari 1: Chapter 64, Hadith 3888 [https://www.islamicfinder.org/hadith/bukhari/merits-of-al-ansar/?page=12] [archived on April 3, 2021])

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